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cont'd said maneuver command, said first and second magnitudes of thrust being unequal to each other in order to create a magnitude of said resultant moment about said instantaneous center of turn which is unequal to zero.

REMARKS

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In the Office Action mailed on January 2, 2001, the Examiner rejected claims 1-3, 5-8, 10-14, and 16-20 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over United States patent 4,220,111 (Krautkremer et al) in view of United States patent 4,009,678 (North) and, in the case of claim 17, in further view of United States patent 4,691,659 (Ito et al).

10 In the rejection, the Examiner combines the North reference with the Krautkremer reference because, in Examiner's words, the North reference "discloses an arrangement of propulsion units mounted on the transom and used for propulsion of the watercraft and also for maneuvering the watercraft."

15 In response, applicants respectfully point out for Examiner's reconsideration that the North patent teaches directly away from the concepts of the present invention. The marine propulsion system disclosed in the North reference requires that the two inboard-outboard drive units react to the operator's commands identically to each other and in tandem. For example, beginning at line 52 of column 4, the North reference described the steering movement of the propulsion units and, explicitly, states that a coupling assembly 9 connects the arms 6 and 6' and
20 push-pull cable units 7 and 8 to each other and to a power steering assist means 10. Throughout the description of the North patent, the two propulsion units are repeatedly described as having their lever arms, 6 and 6', being attached rigidly to each other. For example, beginning at line 63 of column 4, the North patent states that the rotation of the steering wheel 12 of the unit 11 correspondingly oppositely actuates the push-pull cable unit 7 and 8 to effect a corresponding
25 moving force on the coupling assembly 9 for the pivoting of the steering arms 6 and 6' for both pendent drive units 1.

Later in the specification, beginning at line 15 of column 5, the North specification states that an adjustable steering tie bar means 14 interconnects the pivot arms 6 and 6' and the cable unit 7 and 8 for alignment of the pendent units 1 to the boat 3. In column 6, beginning at line 50,
30 the North patent states that the tie bar unit 14 interconnects the steering arms 6 and 6' and steering rods 21 and 45. Subsequently, beginning at line 56 of column 6, the North patent

describes a lock nut 50 that adjustably locks the members 48 and 49 to the tie bar 47 with the outer ends secured to arms 6 and 6'. It further describes member 48 as having an eyebolt end pinned to the arm 6 whereas member 49 is a bifurcated member telescoped over and pinned to arm 6'. The specification of the North patent is consistent in describing the movement of the two inboard-outboard drive units as moving in tandem with each other and not independently. In fact, the description in the specification of the North patent consistently refers to the "propulsion unit 1" in the singular form, rather than in the plural. Applicants respectfully contend that this use of the singular form "propulsion unit 1", in reference to the two inboard-outboard drive units, reinforces applicants' contention that the two inboard-outboard drive units are not capable of moving independently from each other.

Although the North patent does not specifically address thrust control of the engines, applicants respectfully contend that the clear and distinct description of the two inboard-outboard drive units as being locked to each other for operation in tandem with each other clearly implies that the thrust control is not intended to be changed dynamically to create different thrusts from the two inboard-outboard drive units or to create a moment about the center of turn of the marine vessel.

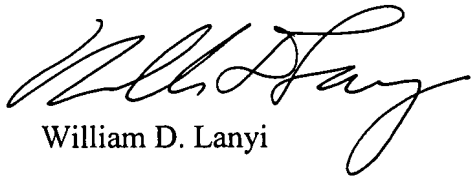
In view of the above discussion of the North patent, applicants respectfully contend that the North patent teaches directly away from the present invention which relies on the ability to create independent and unequal thrust vectors from the two marine propulsion units and, in addition, to rotate the two marine propulsion units relative to the boat independently from each other. These attributes and characteristics of the present invention are clearly described throughout the present application.

In order to more clearly and distinctly distinguish the characteristics of the present invention from the cited references, applicants have further limited the first and second magnitudes of thrust by more explicitly describing these first and second magnitudes of thrust as being unequal to each other in order to create a magnitude of resultant moment about the instantaneous center of turn which is unequal to zero. In other words, if the two marine propulsion units attached to the transom of a marine vessel are aligned with the keel of the marine vessel for straight ahead movement, and the first and second thrust magnitudes are equal to each other, the marine vessel will move straight ahead and no resultant moment about its instantaneous center of turn will cause the marine vessel to rotate about the center of turn. This

characteristic describes the North patent. The present invention, on the other hand, can create a non zero resultant moment about the instantaneous center of turn of the marine vessel even though the two propulsion units are directed straight ahead to cause their thrust vectors to be generally parallel with the keel or centerline of the marine vessel. This characteristic clearly distinguishes it from the North patent. In addition, the ability to rotate the marine propulsion units relative to the marine vessel independently from each other also clearly distinguishes the present invention from the North patent because the North patent explicitly describes its two inboard-outboard drive units as being rigidly linked to each other for tandem movement with each other.

In view of the changes made to the claims of the present application and in further view of the above discussion, applicants respectfully request Examiner's reconsideration of the application and expeditious allowance of claims 1-20.

Respectfully Submitted,



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